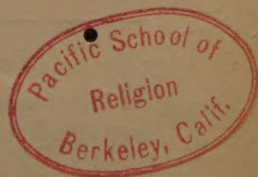


SOCIAL ACTION

Problems of Organized Labor



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SOCIAL ACTION

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THIS LABOR DAY ISSUE was prepared by members of the staff of the Council for Social Action (names given on page 30). The issue does not include a discussion of labor planks in the party platforms.

THE OCTOBER NUMBER will contain a detailed analysis of the political platforms, including their promises to labor.

COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL ACTION
of the Congregational and Christian Churches of America
289 Fourth Avenue
New York, N. Y.

Catechism on Trade Unions

For Those 'A Little Hazy' About Organized Labor

What is a trade union?

A trade union is a voluntary association of wage-earners who unite in order to maintain and improve their working conditions.

Do working conditions really need improvement?

Millions of wage-earners are working for less than the \$1,500 per year required for minimum decency. Thousands have to work more than 40 hours a week and under unsafe and unsanitary conditions.

Is it necessary for wage-earners to unite to improve these conditions?

In present day industry the individual wage-earner, as Chief Justice Taft said, "is helpless in dealing with an employer." Seventy per cent of all factory workers are in establishments with 100 or more employees. In such case the individual worker, who often owns nothing but his labor power and has a family to feed, is at the mercy of the employer.

Is it legal to unite in trade unions to bargain collectively?

The courts have recognized labor's right to organize since Chief Justice Shaw in the Massachusetts case in 1842, *Commonwealth vs. Hunt*, handed down the decision that a union is not a conspiracy.

Is there any group that denies this right to organize?

The position of *employers' organizations* is given by the following statement from the American Iron and Steel Institute: "Today collective bargaining is an established and a legal fact. . . . The Industry stands squarely in favor of the

right and the practice of collective bargaining with its employees."

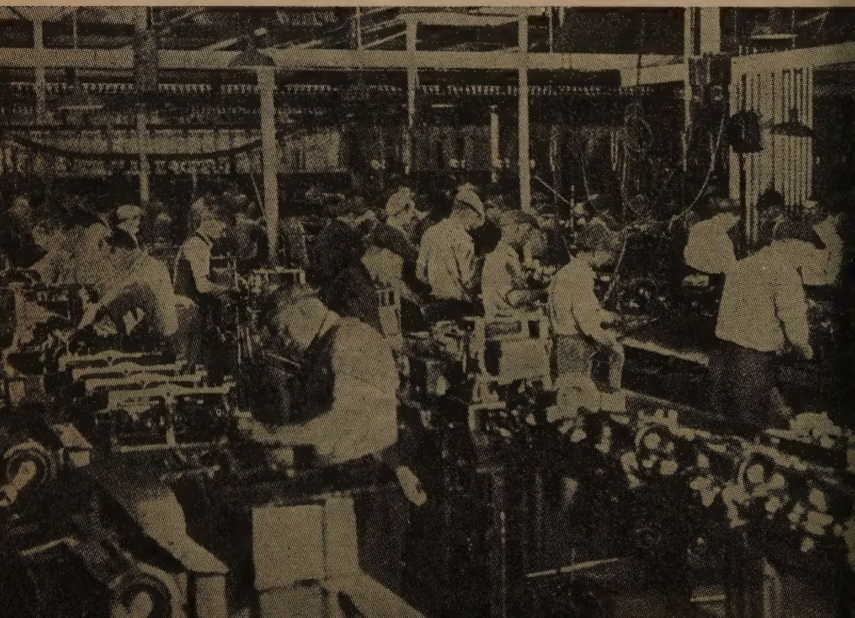
All *political parties* endorse the right. For example, the Republican Party Platform, 1936, would "protect the rights of labor to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of its own choosing."

Religious organizations have been on record for years, as in the official statement of the Federal Council of Churches that it stands for "the right of employes and employers alike to organize; and for adequate means of conciliation and arbitration in industrial disputes."

What are some of the things gained when labor organizes

(a) It is generally recognized that a basic need of our nation today is greater purchasing power to balance production. All will concede that unions have raised wage rates not only for their members but for workers in general. By increasing

"Seventy per cent...are in firms with 100 or more employes"



urchasing power and raising living standards in this way it reduces the likelihood of crime and necessity for relief.

(b) Organized labor helps place an ethical foundation under industry when it sets up minimum standards of work and pay, thus discouraging such practices as child labor and industrial home work. In establishing minimum standards the union helps the conscientious employer solve one of his worst problems—that of the unscrupulous competitor who would undersell by exploiting labor.

(c) Unions become the center of various efforts at self-help and education, thus doing away with the irresponsibility and helplessness of depending on the employer or the government to provide for the worker's welfare.

(d) Democracy is strengthened in our country when wage earners through organization gain a voice in national affairs along with the many other organized groups.

all agree that labor organization serves a useful purpose and that wage-earners have a right to organize, why have only one-eighth of them exercised the right?

Mainly because they are actively opposed in the exercise of this right by many employers and groups sympathetic to employers.

Why do employers and their friends often oppose the union?

They claim that although the principles of unions are fine but in actual practice some of the unions are misinformed, selfish or bent upon using the wrong methods.

Are unions often in the wrong?

Yes, they are human institutions just like manufacturers' associations, political parties and churches. All find it difficult to live up to their principles.

Is there, perhaps, some more fundamental reason why employers oppose unions?

The employee is in business for wages; the employer is in the business for profit. Both wages and profits must come from one source—the income of the company. Taking a short range view, it appears that the more that is paid out to one group, the less there will be for the other. In the past the practice has been for the employers to decide how the income would be divided between themselves and the employees. They often prefer to continue this practice rather than to have representatives of the employees' union help make this important division.

Do union gains always lower employers' profits?

No. Since higher wages increase consumer purchasing power and sometimes increase production also they increase the companies' income out of which employers' profits are paid.

•

Important Trade Union Methods

How do workers gain a voice in determining their working conditions?

When a number of them have come together in their union they agree on what are to be considered as fair wages, hours etc. They present these to the employers with the request that they be granted.

Are requests by the union usually granted?

Some employers recognize this as a reasonable procedure and after discussion of the 'demands' with the workers an agreement between the two parties is reached. Workers have found, however, that they cannot convince most employers by argument.

What does the union do when argument fails?

The only weapon the worker has is the right to withhold his labor. When it is withheld in an organized way through the union, it causes machines to stand idle and orders to remain unfilled. In such a situation the company is likely to conclude that it is cheaper to yield to union demands than to allow the strike to continue.

How is a strike ended?

In the course of a strike there are usually a series of conferences between representatives of the company and of the striking workers, including, perhaps, some neutral party. At these conferences it is likely that each side will give up certain demands and reach a compromise. The compromise agreement is then presented to the strikers by their representatives for acceptance or rejection.

What points are covered by the trade agreement?

There are various kinds of agreements, but most of them include at least these five parts:

- (1) Duration of the agreement,
- (2) Number of hours in the workday and workweek,
- (3) Wage rates for various types of work, both regular and overtime,
- (4) Conditions under which services are to be performed,
- (5) A joint agency of representatives of employers and workers to settle any future disputes.

To what extent is the trade agreement used?

By 1930 over 1,000,000 workers in the United States were protected by them. In better organized industries, for example, full-fashioned hosiery, a number of companies have agreed to the same labor provisions, thus equalizing their labor costs.

Are strikes more serious where there are strong unions?

No. If most of the workers are disciplined union members, the mere prospect of a strike often is all that is necessary to get the company to give consideration to the workers' demands. Even if a strike is called the chances are good that it will lead to an agreement before violence or suffering occurs. If, on the other hand, the union is weak, not only does it have to go out on strike to gain its objectives, but the desperate struggle to make the strike effective often leads to violence.

What is the main task in a strike?

The workers must force the plant to shut down and to remain shut down until an agreement is reached. In other words, the unions must get all workers to leave their jobs if possible. Then it must place members on duty outside the plant to persuade workers from entering to take their jobs and to defeat the strike.

The violent way: Employers refuse to bargain collectively



What are some of the terms used in connection with a strike?

The striking workers stationed near the entrance to the plant are known as *pickets*. They may carry signs to let the public know why they are striking. In some strikes there are a large number of pickets in standing or marching formation known as a *mass picket line*. The persons who take the strikers' jobs are referred to as *strikebreakers* or *scabs*. Organized workers and their sympathizers are naturally resentful of such persons, especially when they are brought in from the company from another community or from a professional strikebreaking agency. To prevent the violence which often grows out of these situations the federal government recently passed the Byrnes Strike-Breaking Act making it a felony knowingly to transport in interstate commerce persons employed "to obstruct . . . or interfere with the right of peaceful picketing during any labor controversy. . . ."

The democratic way: Recognized union casts its vote



Why do strikes often result in violence?

Violence occurs when *both sides* are prepared for violence when the union is so young or weak that it cannot persuade its members to observe the strategy of non-violence or when the employer resorts to violence thinking he can shift the responsibility for it on to the workers, thus breaking the strike or whenever he thinks he can gain the support of local sentiment for his acts.

Do workers like to strike?

When a worker goes on a strike his wages stop. Participation in a strike sometimes leads to the loss of one's job, eviction and actual physical danger. Strikers are sometimes treated as public enemies. Most American wage-earners naturally do not like these things. In cases where the union is financially able to make small grants of money or food as strike relief these partially take the place of wages. Enthusiastic mass meetings, songs and parades create among the striking workers a feeling of brotherliness. But the fact remains that for the worker a strike is no picnic. When one is called on to strike, it is very likely done as a last resort when working and living conditions have become intolerable or after the workers' sense of justice has become outraged.

What coercive methods other than the strike do unions employ?

They attempt to cut down the orders of firms "unfair to organized labor" by means of the boycott. They seek to increase the orders going to firms that are fair to labor by encouraging members and the public to buy goods bearing the union label.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of the "close shop"?

When a firm agrees with a union to employ only union members for particular types of work, the union is strengthened.

ed and the possibility of playing union workers against non-union workers is eliminated. The prospects for peaceable collective bargaining are increased. It is charged by some, however, that it is not democratic to require a person to become a member of any organization in order to obtain a particular job. It is also said that the union is apt to work harder to serve its members if membership is on a voluntary rather than a compulsory basis. Unions often are satisfied with a "preferential shop," in which union members are given preference when jobs are to be filled.

Is it true that unions are more interested in collecting dues than in benefiting the members?

Dues in some unions amount to as much as \$15 a month. In most unions they are much less. The members consider, however, that the amount of dues is small in comparison with the increase in the weekly wages obtained through organization. A great deal of the money paid into the unions comes back to the members in the form of benefit services in case of death, illness, unemployment, old age, disability, etc. In 1934 these benefit payments by unions amounted to nearly \$10,000,000.

Are there women in the trade unions?

Since women compete with men for jobs, unions are anxious that women be organized and that they receive the same pay as men for the same work. The 250,000 women now in trade unions include teachers, actresses, telephone operators, textile workers, clothing workers and government employees.

Leading Types of Trade Unions

Of what type were the first local unions?

The first unions were composed of handicraftsmen brought together by a common interest in their craft.

What effect did the factory system have on the type of unions?

The idea of One Big Union developed and the Knights of Labor grew until in 1886 it had a membership of 700,000 including skilled and unskilled workers, men and women, white collar workers, and even men in the professions.

What was the reaction to the One Big Union organization?

In the 80's, craft unions, disapproving the idea, federated into the American Federation of Labor. The Knights of Labor soon disbanded.

What is the middle ground between One Big Union and the craft unions?

The industrial union, including all workers in one industry. It is this type that has had the greatest increase in membership during the last five years, particularly among the semi-skilled and unskilled workers in mass-production industries.

What advantages do industrial unions have over craft unions?

By including both skilled and unskilled workers industrial unions combine the favorable bargaining position of the former with the numerical strength of the latter. One agreement covers all workers in an industry. When practical the industrial union may include craft locals. It is adapted to the factory system. The wider range of membership tends to make membership dues lower than in the craft unions.

What are the problems of industrial unions?

To be effective the union must be as broad and as wide as the whole industry. Since it must include so many workers of different types the problem of education becomes more difficult and more imperative. Such large organizations tend to become factional and autocratic. It is hard to keep the membership active in the democratic management of the union.

What type of organization is the American Federation of Labor?

It is a voluntary federation of self-governing craft and industrial unions. Its membership includes international, national, federal or local unions, state and city federations, and trades departments.

How do these various unions differ?

International unions have local unions in Canada. National unions do not. Federal unions are local unions that are affiliated directly with the A. F. of L. rather than with a national union. State and city federations of labor include the local unions within their areas. The federations cannot call strikes or make agreements, but do function in legislative matters.

How is the A. F. of L. governed?

Seventeen officers compose the Executive Council which acts between conventions. Delegates to the annual conventions compose the ultimate governing body.

Since the A. F. of L. is merely a voluntary federation having few powers, what does it do?

In its own words—

- (1) "It maintains inter-communication between affiliates, and is in constant correspondence with a corps of organizers throughout the country.
- (2) "It guards the workers' interest in the national Congress. It indorses and protests in the name of labor. . . .
- (3) "Annually it assembles the wage-earners in convention to exchange ideas and methods, to promote mutual interests, to develop greater solidarity, to proclaim the workers' burdens, aims and hopes."

The Strategy of the Employer

How do some employers interfere with the workers' right to organize?

- (1) Spy systems are used to learn of union activities.
- (2) Workers active in the union are discharged.
- (3) A "blacklist" containing names of "union" members discharged is circulated through employers' associations.
- (4) Plants are shut down and no union men rehired upon reopening.
- (5) An employe is asked to sign a "yellow dog" contract, promising not to join a union while employed in the establishment.
- (6) The company is reorganized and different men hired. In this way all claims to insurance, bonus, stock and other paternalistic types of welfare work from the company are lost.
- (7) The plant moves to new territory where unions are not strong.
- (8) Large establishments are often located in villages which they also own. In these cases union organizers have been threatened with prosecution for trespassing on private property if they enter the village.
- (9) In small communities large employers often can influence local authorities to keep out union representatives by force or intimidation.

How do some employers interfere with the right to strike?

Employers often secure injunctions from the courts restraining the workers from picketing or from the use of the boycott. In 1932 the Norris-LaGuardia Act was passed, which sharply restricts the rights of federal courts to issue injunctions against unions.

When employers recognize that organization is inevitable, what strategy do they adopt?

The employers themselves often attempt to organize the workers into associations which the company aids financially and otherwise.

How many workers are members of these associations or company unions?

In a study made in 1935 by the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 20 per cent of employes in the 14,725 establishments reporting to the Bureau worked in establishments which had company unions. The total membership of company unions is usually estimated at about 2,500,000 or about one-half the membership of independent labor unions.

How recent a development are company unions?

Only 3 of the 593 company unions studied by the Bureau were organized before 1900; 15 per cent during the war period; and 63 per cent in the past three years.

Are company unions voluntary associations?

In 40 per cent of company unions, membership is synonymous with employment—workers have no choice but to belong.

What are the disadvantages of company unions?

Workers who fear discharge or who are looking for advancement do not bring up disagreeable matters with the management. Company unions are not a part of the labor movement but are local in interest and information. It is thus impossible for them to win an industry-wide agreement which would stabilize the industry. They have no financial strength. Being financed in 70 per cent of the cases by the company rather than by the members, they are likely to be controlled by the company and not by the workers whom they are supposed to serve.

The Role of the Government

What is the role of the government in union struggles?

Since government officials are closer to employers than to wage-earners in economic status and social outlook, they have tended for years to support the employer side either directly or indirectly. The growing membership of unions and the nation's need for mass purchasing power are causing the government to recognize and protect labor's rights.

What laws has Congress recently passed with reference to labor organization?

The Norris-LaGuardia law assures to employes the right to collective bargaining, outlaws anti-union contracts, and regulates the issuance of injunctions by federal courts.

The National Labor Relations Act designates certain practices as "unfair labor practices."

National Guard assisting non-union workers to break a strike



What are these "unfair labor practices"?

- (1) To interfere with, restrain or coerce employees in organizing or collective bargaining.
- (2) To dominate or interfere with the formation or administration of any labor organization, as is done in company unions.
- (3) To encourage or discourage membership in any labor organization by discrimination in the matter of hiring, or period, term, or condition of employment.
- (4) To discharge or discriminate against an employee because of the filing of charges against an employer.
- (5) To refuse to bargain collectively with representatives of the employees.

How is this Act enforced?

The National Labor Relations Board is set up with the power to (1) Issue a complaint and notice of hearing before the Board; (2) Invoke the aid of courts; (3) Investigate and issue subpoenas and require attendance of witnesses.

What constitutional questions are involved in labor legislation?

- (1) Does the regulation of the employer-employee relationship violate the principle that citizens shall not be deprived of their liberty or property without due process of law?
- (2) Can federal jurisdiction over this relationship be sustained under the power of Congress to regulate interstate commerce?

What does the United States Department of Labor do in the trade union field?

Its Conciliation Service mediates labor disputes when requested to do so by the employer, an employee or the public.

How often does it act?

1,007 cases involving 785,077 workers were handled in the year ending June 30, 1935. This was 58 per cent of the strikes and 67 per cent of the workers involved.

How do unions feel about compulsory arbitration by the government of all disputes?

They remember how often the government has opposed them. They would prefer depending on their own efforts until the government demonstrates a more impartial attitude.

Do government employes belong to unions?

In 1935 the membership of government service labor unions was 354,200.

The Responsibility of the Church

Should the Church concern itself with trade unions?

The Church seeks to establish the Kingdom of God in which all shall have the life abundant. This though it be spiritual must have its foundation in economic well-being. Trade unions have demonstrated their usefulness in building this economic foundation of security and where it is most needed. The Church believes in the importance and dignity of the individual person. The trade union takes the individual wage-earner who economically, politically and socially is helpless and often is regarded as insignificant, and through organization gives him some control over his living conditions and a voice in determining his government. In these and other respects the Church and trade unions are natural allies. This fact has been recognized and practiced on hundreds of occasions and for decades.

Are not trade unions class organizations in contrast to the church which aspires to be classless?

Trade unions are class organizations as are all secular

organizations. Their "class" embraces all wage-earners—from teachers to sweepers—who together with their dependents constitute two-thirds of our population and the majority of our church membership. Not only is it the largest class but it is the class to which our Master and his early disciples belonged and which today, as then, is in greatest need.

Can the Church with its inclusive gospel afford to support organizations concerned merely with "wages, hours and working conditions"?

The fact that such organizations have carried on for hundreds of years and with ever-increasing strength would seem to indicate that "hours, wages and working conditions" are as close to the hearts of men as some matters with which the church now deals. There seems to be a close connection between wages and some of the social problems now on the conscience of the Church—for example, child labor, relief, alcoholism and crime. However, trade unions are extending their interests from wages and hours to a broad program of social education and legislation. They are becoming an integral part of our entire social fabric.

How can the average church aid union organization?

The situation is such that one of the greatest aids is simply to be informed. The next service the Church can render is to help inform the community. The Church is organized to spread information. Miracles can be accomplished in employer-employee relations when more thinking is mixed in with our feeling.

How are some churches helping wage-earners?

- (1) Securing rooms for union meetings.
- (2) Participating in their educational, cooperative and legislative activities.
- (3) Buying union label goods.

(4) Having representation in local union organization as fraternal delegates or chaplains, interested not only in becoming informed but in helping constructive forces within the union to overcome weaknesses and to make improvements.

Should the Church always support the unions?

The Church should follow the policy of getting the facts in each particular case. In exceptional instances the facts will not justify the Church in supporting labor. The mistake which the Church frequently makes, however, is to get only the half of the story which is the easier to get—the employer's—and then support that side either directly by action or indirectly by inaction. This tendency has led to retaliation by employes as serious as the employers' withdrawal of financial support.

Should the Church act as a mediator?

Parties to labor disputes are often so embittered that necessary negotiations cannot be made without a neutral third party. If a mediator is not available or if local parties are needed, the Church has a responsibility to assist in this way. This may lead to a peaceful settlement. Often there are situations when by speaking out in behalf of the workers' civil rights, the Church can influence public opinion, stop police violence and news-suppression.

The goal: Disputes settled in employer-employee conference



For the Welfare of Workers

O God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made, carest for thy creation more than men care for their property, and lovest every soul of man more than a mother her only child; may this same care and love displace man's inhumanity and selfishness.

We pray for the coming of the commonwealth where those who toil shall be honoured and rewarded, where a man's worth shall be reckoned higher than the price of the things he fashions with hand or brain, where science shall serve, not destruction or private gain, but preservation and the common good.

We remember those who labour continually under the danger of death, that others may be protected, warmed, and comforted. May the whole community be stirred to wonder whether men need suffer as they do.

Give inspiration to those who labor at the perfecting of protective science, and who seek the redemption of the workers. Make a new tie of blood sacrifice between us all. Since thou didst, to our confusion and amazement, declare thy nature most of all in the Craftsman of Nazareth, so once again may redemption spring from the ranks of those who toil.

We do not ask to pass beyond the things of sense and time, but to see in them thy presence; in the crises of our times, thy judgments; in the rising demand for righteousness, the coming of thy kingdom.—*Amen*

—WILLIAM E. ORCHARD

Labor in the 'Next War'

There is a great deal of feeling that in event of the "Next War" both labor and capital should be drafted. Dorothy Thompson reports American Legion spokesmen as going up and down Vermont advocating such legislation. To many people this sounds like a reasonable proposition. Therefore, the searching analysis of the War Department's proposed Industrial Mobilization Plan, which has just been made available by the Nye Munitions Investigations Committee (Senate Report 944, Part 4) is particularly timely. It is an example of legislation attempting to regulate capital and labor in war-time and illustrates the difficulty of according equal treatment to both.

Briefly, the Industrial Mobilization Plan, as set forth in Senate bills 1716-1722, provides for a general draft law. Under this law every male person over 18 must be registered with the draft authorities. All able-bodied persons between the ages of 18 and 45 are to be made members of an "unorganized militia" and as such are liable to military service.

The Industrial Mobilization Plan sets up an administrator of labor who is to be an outstanding industrial leader. The War Industries Administration does not provide for any labor representation at all except on an advisory council which has neither authority nor actual responsibility.

Senator Bennett C. Clark, who analyzed these War Department bills, declared in the committee report:

"The committee finds that S. 1721 which puts all male labor under registration and provides for such penalties and also for court martial in case any of the registrants fail or neglect fully to perform any duty required of him, can be used to effect and enforce a draft of labor and to remove, in effect, the right of any laborer to refuse employment in private industry under conditions or at wages which do not satisfy his needs. The power to call into military service any union or

other representatives of labor who become spokesmen for other employees in attempts to secure higher wages *is the power to break strikes* (italics ours). This also can be done through the use of military force in removing spokesmen from the plant involved to other plants or into active service or cutting off the food allowance of all strikers."

"There is nothing in S. 1721," the report continues, "to prevent the use of men in the military forces to operate industrial plants while in uniform, which was done in at least one case in the last war. There is also nothing to prevent the War Department from inducting all the workers in any plant in the country into military service, forcing them to work in that plant under military orders."

There is to be no spokesman for labor in the "Labor Division." "This agency is to have power vitally affecting the well-being of millions of working people," states Senator Clark. "Yet as planned, it is completely dominated by one party in the case—the employer side."

Would Guarantee Profits to Capital

This Mobilization Plan which puts labor under the complete control of the War Department, does not propose to regiment capital. 'Leading industrialists' will be put in control in all departments. The 'cost-plus contract' is to be replaced by an 'adjusted compensation contract' which guarantees a basic profit of six per cent and an opportunity for larger profits through a government bonus. The Nye Committee, which thoroughly condemned the cost-plus contract, declares that the proposed substitute "cannot eliminate entirely profiteering or inflation" because:

- (1) The government must rely upon industry for information. In the pressure of war-time, these accounting items are inevitably determined on a basis advantageous to industry.
- (2) There are always many loopholes in profit limitation schemes designed to apply uniformly to our immense and complicated industrial structure.

Meanwhile, according to the committee report, "The Industrial Mobilization Plan clearly contemplates control over wages in the next war. . . . A determined effort to keep wages down is possible. . . . If wages should be stabilized and there should be a war-time increase in the cost of living, the position of labor would become intolerable. . . . Special studies undertaken by the committee indicate that wages increased much less than salaries and profits (1914-1918).. . . Labor actually lost ground to management during the war period as regards shares in the national income."

Senator Clark declares that *"it will be very difficult in war time, even through the high taxation recommended by the committee, to put capital on a level with men drafted for front line service. . . .* In view of the growth of dictatorships in the world, using labor under military control, it is very important that the people weigh the grave dangers to our democracy in the draft of man power and labor under the conditions proposed. The price of war may be actual operating dictatorship under military control in this country."

National Referendum Recommended

The Committee suggests "that Congress consider putting a limitation upon its own powers and submit a national referendum at the election in 1938 on the military draft of men for service outside continental America." This is highly desirable, the Committee believes, because "the democratic treatment of labor, under the Constitution, is essential to the survival of our institutions and should not be replaced by military control over labor unless a change in our institutions has been previously authorized by the people in the form of an amendment to the Constitution. . . . *The matter is certainly of sufficient importance to warrant Congress in asking the consent of the Nation before imposing the type of draft indicated to be a part of the War Department plans.*"

General Council Authorizes Plebiscite

Our readers have perhaps already heard of the highly significant action of the General Council at Mt. Holyoke in requesting the CSA to take a plebiscite on economic issues sometime during the period 1937-8. The questions are to be formulated by the CSA and approved by the Executive Committee of the General Council.

It will be a few months before plans for conducting this vote will take form. We shall keep our readers informed of developments.

In the meantime several observations may be made—

1. The plebiscite as an educational tool has been demonstrated and accepted.
2. Just as the churches have come to realize that international peace is a religious concern, so now they are realizing that economic questions are also within the scope of the church's interest. Thus, the gospel comes to be applied to all human relations.
3. Such a plebiscite taken by the whole denominations (2,500 churches participated in the peace plebiscite) will give helpful support and encouragement to ministers who have heretofore found it difficult to discuss economic issues in their churches. New strength comes from doing things together.
4. There has not been as much discussion in our churches of economic issues as of peace issues. This plebiscite will give us all the opportunity to bring our thinking up to date.

With the plebiscite coming, it will be more important than ever to have people reading *Social Action*. How many people in your church are subscribers? Does your minister subscribe? Here is an excellent opportunity for you to extend the interest in social issues and to lay the ground for intelligent participation by your church in the plebiscite. *Persuade a few friends to subscribe, or even subscribe for them!*

Drouths Put Churches on the Spot

• by Margueritte H. Bro

CABLE, WISCONSIN—Returning this week from the fertile Morelos valley of central Mexico, it is more than discouraging to find the middle west parched and disheartened. Here in north Wisconsin, early potatoes for whose seeding the farmer paid high prices this spring are still about the size of peas but their vines are dead and there is no more growth in them. Of peas themselves there are none, not even in cans at the town's grocery stores. Even the berries, upon which northern farmers depend for their winter fruit, are not to be found in the woods. And besides these losses, forest fires have burned over thousands of acres.

What about the churches in a drouth area? Discouragement has a strangely permeating quality: it is difficult to feel hopeful about the outlook for religion when at the same time one is rather hopeless about the outlook for the winter's food supply. It is difficult, but apparently it is done. Waiting on the desk are dozen of letters with this sort of refrain:

"Certainly this fall in Illinois we will need those Schools of Citizenship of which we talked last May, more than we anticipated at the time. It looks as if our smaller cities would feel the burden of unemployment worse than last winter and it also looks as if the independent business man will have a harder time to keep his head above water. If the church cannot prove its usefulness now, it just isn't much good. People are trying to think and we have to help them orient themselves in a universe which appears increasingly precarious."

"Our church has decided to study cooperatives and we wish you could outline a six weeks course for church nights and also suggest material keyed to high-school interest. There must be something to an economic experiment which has done

as much for Sweden as Dr. Herring's pamphlet gives it credit for. We want facts, and we also want some knowledge of procedure in case we decide to do a little experimenting ourselves. Of course, as a pastor I shall not object if the cooperative spirit spills over into a revival of personal religion such as Kagawa tells about."

"... and so the women of the state would like to do some concerted thinking on Social Action just as they have previously done on their missionary interests. We expect to have packets on Child Labor, Social Security, and Civil Liberties presented to all of the churches before the winter is over."

Would Sponsor Community Forums

"We are inviting the protestant churches of our neighborhood to join in our open forum on economic problems. So far the response is splendid. Maybe if we hold the forums on Sunday afternoons it may permeate some minds that economic questions are also religious questions! Unless the church has something to offer in the area of economic thinking, it cannot be of much spiritual use in this burned up farming area."

"We could use the full time of a representative of the Council for Social Action right in this state this winter. And it would prove a fine investment for the churches. We Congregationalists did not invent the two-party system nor introduce capitalism nor authorize the present race tension, but we do seem somewhat more responsible than others for the answers to the problems in that we have taken on this duly authorized body called a Council for Social Action."

These 'samples' are only a small part of the encouraging paragraphs in this week's mail. But they are enough to make us feel that the winter ahead will be a busy and profitable one in many localities. Apparently it is still true in this our democracy that some communities feel personal responsibility for social problems and that some churches have the will to go ahead in search of the 'religious' solution of them.

A Good Book on Labor

American Labor Struggles, by Samuel Yellen. New York, Harcourt, 1936. 398 pp. \$3.50

The vast ignorance of labor history and labor struggles in this country on the part of the ordinary man and woman is not altogether their own fault. The papers and pamphlets put out by the labor press do not reach them. Most labor histories seem to be designed for students and are dull reading.

Mr. Yellen's illuminating *American Labor Struggles*, therefore, fills a very real need. Authentic material is presented throughout. The author cites documentary evidences, quotes from participants, and makes large use of government reports and hearings. But nowhere does Mr. Yellen's careful scholarship impede his clear and forceful writing.

The book is a chronicle of ten American labor struggles: *the Railroad uprising of 1877; Haymarket; the Homestead Lockout; the Pullman Strike; Anthracite, 1902; the Lawrence Strike; Bloody Ludlow; Steel, 1919; Southern Textile Strikes; and Gastonia; Longshoremen on the Western Coast.*

The author analyzes the underlying causes of these struggles; the relations between wages and dividends; the goading effects of wage cuts on the workers; their unending efforts to maintain a standard of living above the mere subsistence level.

An even more important thread running through the history of these ten labor struggles is the account of the tactics used and policies followed in the conflicts between capital and labor. These, like the workings of secret diplomacy, are often obscured and hidden. In revealing and explaining these tactics and policies, Mr. Yellen furnishes a key by which the reader can interpret the labor struggles going on around him and what he reads in the newspaper.

If he would understand the forces back of the present drive to organize the steel workers, let him read the chapters, the "Homestead Lockout" and "Steel—1919." If he would follow the gen-

esis of the company union, let him read "Bloody Ludlow" and see how the Rockefellers, with their unyielding opposition to organized labor, developed a substitute, the Industrial Representation Plan. This was the plan which the U. S. Commission on Industrial Relations declared "embodies none of the principles of effectual collective bargaining and instead is a hypocritical pretense of granting what is in reality withheld." If he would appraise the clash of opposing labor groups, the story of the Lawrence strike would be enlightening.

Suitable for Discussion Groups

Not only is this an exciting experience for the individual reader, but such a book furnishes an ideal basis for organized group discussion. The material is here, the sources are cited. The stage is set for groups in the church. Men's clubs, women's societies, young people's societies could easily use this book as the foundation for their discussion. For example, in any of the chapters under consideration the discussion might center around such questions as:

What did the workers want? Were their demands fair?
How did the employers meet (or resist) the demands?
What part was played by the courts? By the state? By the armed power of government, be it police, state militia or federal troops?

What happens to the right of free speech?

What about the blacklist? Labor spies?

Was there a company union in the picture?

Who controlled the press and how did it react? The Church?

This is a book to read and talk about. Buy or borrow it. Add it to your church literature table collection. See that your public library has a copy. The growing labor movement, the emergence of a labor party makes knowledge of labor history and of the background of labor's struggle imperative to those who are working for a better social order.

What Can I Do For Social Action?

Through the Church Social Action Committee, you can—

1. Pass around your copy of *Social Action* to your friends.
2. Secure subscribers to *Social Action*.
3. Form a study club of a few friends, and discuss the social issues dealt with in our magazine.
4. Organize a forum or a series of discussions in your church on vital issues. Call in some outside speakers.
5. Conduct a literature table, using our material and that of other organizations. Keep a few good books in circulation. Put up posters on your bulletin board.
6. Study some community situation, such as relief, unemployment, prisons, recreational opportunities, housing, labor organization, cooperatives, civil liberties.

Through the State Social Action Committee, you can—

1. Meet regularly to plan your program of education.
2. Study one or two state problems—such as relief, ROTC teachers oath, industrial standards—and send out reports to the churches.
3. Form teams of speakers on social action to address associations and churches.
4. Keep the churches informed of your activities through your conference paper.

Remember that we stand ready to provide you with counsel literature, speakers.

Hubert C. Herring, Director, 289 Fourth Ave., N. Y. C.

Alfred Schmalz, Associate Director, 289 Fourth Ave., N. Y. C.

Harold O. Hatcher, Research, 289 Fourth Ave., N. Y. C.

Katharine Terrill, Literature, 289 Fourth Ave., N. Y. C.

Frank W. McCulloch, Industrial Relations, 5757 University Avenue, Chicago

Margueritte Bro, Community Service, 5757 University Ave

Ferry Platt, Rural Life, Merom Institute, Merom, Indian

Elizabeth Whiting, Community Service, Weston, Mass.

Recent Pamphlets on Labor

- Introduction to American Trade Unionism*, by Elsie Glück. Affiliated Schools for Workers, 302 East 35th St., New York, N. Y., 91 pp., 35c.
- The Worker and His Government*, by Lois McDonald and E. Stein. Affiliated Schools for Workers, 142 pp., 35c.
- Labor's Charter of Rights*, by American Federation of Labor, Washington, D. C., 1935, 50 pp.
- Introduction to Labor Problems*, by Joel Seidman. Brookwood Labor College, Katonah, N. Y., 1936, 24 pp., 15c.
- Industrial Unionism*, by Committee for Industrial Organization, Washington, D. C., 1936, 31 pp., 10c.
- How the Rubber Workers Won*, by Committee for Industrial Organization, 1936, 16 pp., 5c.
- The Automobile Industry and Organized Labor*, by A. J. Muste. Christian Social Justice Fund, 513 Park Ave., Baltimore, Md., 1936, 59 pp., 15c.
- Labor and the New Deal*, by Louis Stark. Public Affairs Committee, National Press Bldg., Washington, D. C., 1936, 34 pp., 10c.
- True Freedom for Negro and White Labor*, by Frank R. Crosswaith and A. B. Lewis. Negro Labor News Service, 312 West 125th St., New York, N. Y., 1936, 59 pp., 10c.
- The Company Union in Plan and Practice*, by Lincoln Fairley. Brookwood Labor College (mimeographed), 1936, 57 pp., 35c.
- Company Unions Today*, by Robert Dunn. International Publishers, 799 Broadway, New York, N. Y., 1935, 30 pp., 5c.
- Recent Legislation and Labor Relations*, by D. A. McCabe. Princeton University, Princeton, N. J., 1936, 26 pp.
- How Goes the Bill of Rights?* by American Civil Liberties Union, 31 Union Square, New York, N. Y., 1936, 95 pp.
- Labor Fact Book*, by Labor Research Association, New York, N. Y., 1936, 223 pp., \$1.00.
- Problems of Organized Labor*, The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, March, 1936.

'Labor Should Have A Chance'

How can we help each other
To make a better world?

People living in a city
Own shares in a mill
Hundreds of miles away.
"We want more money," they say—
"Send us more money."

To send more money
The man who runs the mill
Puts children to work
In place of men and women
Because they work cheaper.

To send more money
The man who runs the mill
Must buy his cotton where it is cheapest;
To have cheap cotton
Many land-owners keep workers on their farms
And pay them very little;

Idle mill-hands,
Children working cheaply,
Farmers slowly starving,
Cannot buy the clothes they need;
The mills must stop—
And all are out of work—
And out of money.
How can we stop this?

Laborers should have a chance
To be happy in their work.
Better wages
Better conditions
And a chance to co-operate
With their employers.

Children should have a chance
To grow and live
Before they start to work.



—From a Litany written by children in Vacation Schools in New York City
and used in a service at the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, July 23, 1936.